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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of teachers in one school as they implemented shared decision making (SDM) over a period of over 2 years. Data from 100 interviews with 54 respondents including teachers, administrators, and other staff are analyzed. The changes the teachers experienced are examined at varying levels of SDM involvement from a symbolic interactionist perspective. Data indicated that teachers assumed new responsibilities through SDM. All teachers participated in the curriculum revision process, and many took part in faculty hiring. Faculty members elected to the SDM Council assumed a number of responsibilities associated with their roles as SDM representatives, but only a few Council members took responsibility for communicating effectively with grade-level colleagues. The breakdown in communication between the Council and the rest of the faculty and staff meant that almost all SDM responsibilities fell to Council members only. Some teachers did not perceive that they had the right to express their views and concerns. A number of participants felt that they had gained confidence from their involvement in SDM. Teachers' relationships with administrators changed only when administrators communicated clearly that SDM altered traditional governance. (Contains 26 references.) (JDD)

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Teachers' Perceptions of Role Change Through Shared Decision Making: A Two-Year Case Study

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, 1993.

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In recent years scholars (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Griffin, 1988; Maeroff, 1988) have advocated shared decision making (SDM) as a strategy for improving schools. SDM is a form of school governance that increases decision-making authority at the school site and places school decisions in the hands of all local educational stakeholders, including teachers, other school staff, parents, and, in some cases, students (Cistone, 1989; Duke, Showers, and Imber, 1980). Proponents of SDM have posited that it will change teachers' roles. These advocates believe SDM will give teachers greater responsibility for the success of their schools (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and will alter teachers' relationships with other role partners in the school (Johnson, 1990).

Scholars (Conley, 1991; Griffin, 1988; Lieberman, 1988) have asserted that role change will be difficult for teachers, and researchers (Jenni & Mauriel, 1990; Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989; Malen & Ogawa, 1988) have indicated that teachers' roles do not change during SDM's implementation. However, these researchers have not investigated role change through a longitudinal, in-depth analysis of teachers in a single school, and they have not highlighted teachers' varying experiences of SDM. Further, they have failed to define role change clearly and to acknowledge the subtlety, complexity, and difficulty of role change.

My intent in this study is to contribute to our understanding of teacher role change during SDM's implementation by examining the perceptions of teachers in one school as they implemented SDM over a period of two and one-half years. I examine the changes these teachers experienced at varying levels of SDM involvement from a symbolic interactionist perspective and draw upon understandings provided by role theorists to interpret teachers' perceptions of their altered roles.

Background for the Study

To understand teachers' perceptions of role change in this study requires knowledge of the context in which the teachers worked and enacted SDM. In the following sections, I briefly discuss (a) the implementation of the district SDM project on which this study is based, (b) teaching conditions in the school in which the study was conducted, and (c) teachers' definitions of SDM and the governance structures that emerged at the school.

Startup of the SDM Project and Formative Evaluation

In the 1989-90 school year, the Palmetto County School District (a pseudonym), a large urban district in the Southeast, initiated an SDM project in 10 pilot schools. The school board contracted with the Research and Development Center on School Improvement at the Univerity of Florida to provide a formative evaluation of the process of implementation of SDM in six of the pilot schools. Since that time a team of researchers has followed the progress of SDM in Palmetto County and provided written reports to the schools, as well as to the school board

and district administration.

As a member of this research team, I was assigned to study Silver Hill Elementary School (a pseudonym), one of the six schools designated for the evaluation. This study of teacher role change grew out of that evaluation. From February, 1990, to May, 1992, I made seven site visits to collect interview and observational data, and I conducted additional interviews over the telephone. I submitted to the school seven status reports based on my analysis of these data. My involvement in the Research and Development Center's formative evaluation of SDM at Silver Hill has implications for this study. I had easy access to the school and to key informants. The status reports I sent to the school also served over time to alleviate respondents' concerns about the use of data I gathered.

The School Context

Silver Hill was 1 of 42 schools in Palmetto County that applied in 1989 to become SDM schools. At the time of its application for acceptance as 1 of the district's 10 pilot schools, it had 57 teachers on its faculty. Of those, 49 were present for the vote to determine if they would apply to participate in SDM, and 42 teachers, or 92% of those present, voted in favor of the application.

The teachers I interviewed in February, 1990, agreed that the faculty wanted to participate in the project because of the severity of the school's problems. Interview respondents all commented about their students' difficult lives. In addition to poverty and other problems that America's inner-city children typically face, many of the schools' children did not speak English and had to surmount language barriers and cultural obstacles. A respected veteran teacher said, "People just don't understand these kids. . . . For some teachers from a different culture, it's just a culture shock." The Silver Hill Elementary Five-Year Plan for 1991-1996 noted that the student turnover rate was 47%, meaning that approximately one-half of the students who were enrolled at the school at the beginning of the year completed the year there. Teachers also noted that parent participation was very poor and teacher turnover was very high.

Because the student population almost doubled between 1986 and 1989, the school was extremely crowded when I first visited in 1990. As a temporary solution to the overcrowding, Palmetto County opened a school annex in August, 1990. The annex, approximately one mile from the main campus, consists of a renovated one-story restaurant and 35 portables. Many of the portables sit on pavement that previously served as a parking lot. The refurbished restaurant houses the school's offices, cafeteria, media center, computer lab, and one classroom. City streets border the campus on three sides and a parking lot on the fourth. Although intended to be temporary, the annex was still in use at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year.

Opening the annex relieved some of the overcrowding, but it also spread the faculty across two campuses and created physical

barriers to collaboration. In many ways, Silver Hill became two schools. Teachers noted that the campuses usually held separate faculty meetings and that faculty at the annex had little contact with their peers at the main campus. One of the school's assistant principals was assigned to the annex and the other to the main campus. The principal maintained offices at both campuses and split his time between them. Many faculty reported that he was less accessible after the annex opened. Teachers at the annex said that they worked in isolation. Approximately 30 teachers taught in portable buildings that were lined up seven rows deep on the school's rectangular campus. One teacher observed, "It's hard to be part of a portable school. . . . Sometimes when you go to the faculty meetings, you can see people that you haven't seen for weeks."

SDM at Silver Hill

When Palmetto County began the project, the district gave schools little direction about how to implement SDM, ostensibly to give individual schools as much freedom and flexibility as possible. During initial interviews at Silver Hill, I asked teachers what SDM meant to them. The one point on which they overwhelmingly agreed was that SDM would give them greater input into decisions. However, there was little clarity or agreement about how SDM would enable them to improve their school. As one veteran teacher said, "I'm just grateful to be able to have some input here, and I hope that's what shared decision making is all about." One implication of defining teacher input as the purpose of SDM was that SDM was not viewed as a strategy for restructuring the school. Instead, teachers saw SDM as a way to modify current school operations by rendering better decisions collectively than the administration alone could make. Most faculty either did not perceive that SDM gave them the collective authority to transform their school or had not reflected on the need to restructure their school. In the spring of 1990 the faculty and staff had little time to develop a vision of SDM's possibilities or to reach agreement and clarity about decision domains and SDM procedures. Nonetheless, district guidelines required the school to develop a governance plan and a school improvement plan by May, 1990.

In meetings during the spring of 1990, the entire faculty and staff gathered to discuss SDM goals. Teachers later recalled that obtaining consensus from all participants was difficult and frustrating. Although most faculty and staff initially wanted to be actively involved in decisions, SDM soon evolved into a representative form of governance. That is, soon after the election of the first SDM Council in March, 1990, teachers began to describe SDM as an activity that was conducted almost exclusively by the Council. Council members were expected to report SDM business to other faculty and staff. However, as I explain later in the paper, SDM communication was poor. During the course of this study most teachers who were not Council members complained that they did not understand the process, did

not know what was happening, and did not believe it was accomplishing anything. Because SDM became almost exclusively a Council activity, faculty at Silver Hill had diverse experiences of SDM, and thus of role change.

Design of the Study

Hewitt (1988) argued that individuals, especially in new and problematic situations, construct their roles. If teachers actively construct their roles, it is important that studies of teacher role change focus on the perceptions of the teachers under consideration. Because qualitiative research attends to participants' perspectives and understandings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Spindler, 1982), and because qualitative methods enable the researcher to observe the process of change, the methods of inquiry for this study were qualitative.

The theoretical frame for this research is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists place primacy upon human meaning, believing that people "act toward things on the basis of the meanings those objects have for them" (Jacob, 1988, pp. 12-13). Shared decision making is intended as a way of restructuring the school environment and altering teachers' organizational relationships (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). Thus, it has the potential to change a traditionally stable institution and many of the situations in which teachers work. Only by examining the perspectives of participants and by inferring the meanings they give to situations can the researcher understand their adjustment. Symbolic interactionism meets that methodological demand and enabled me to interpret participants' emerging definitions of the roles they believed they were to enact, as well as the reasons for their embracing those roles, or their commitment to more traditional roles.

Data Collection

This study draws upon data collected over a two-year period while I was a member of a research team evaluating SDM in six schools. The data include 100 interviews conducted with 54 different respondents, including teachers, administrators, and other staff. Six of the the interviews were conducted over the telephone. The other 94 were conducted on site during seven visits to the school. The interviews averaged 39 minutes, although some were as short as 20 minutes and others as long as 50. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The transcripts total more than 800 typewritten pages.

Based on analysis of data gathered from February, 1989, through May, 1991 (including 48 interviews of teachers and administrators), I selected 14 teachers in October, 1991, who had varying levels of SDM involvement. Using Goffman's (1973) metaphor of the performance, I categorized these teachers as performers, audience, or outsiders (p. 145). Performers were teachers who were actively involved; audience were concerned and

supportive, but not as involved; and outsiders were uninvolved. Six of the teachers were identified as performers, four as audience, and four as outsiders.[1] I interviewed these teachers in November, 1991, and again in February, 1992. My intent in these interviews was to elicit teachers' perceptions about their professional roles, with particular attention to role changes that occurred during SDM implementation and to factors that either contributed to or constrained the evolution of their roles. Although I drew upon all 100 interviews for this study, the 28 interviews focused on teachers' roles were especially useful in clarifying systemic differences in teachers' experiences of SDM.

Other data for the study include over 200 pages of field notes of SDM Council meetings, other school meetings, observations at the school site, and notes from informal interviews. I collected approximately 550 pages of archives, including annual progress reports from the school, a staff handbook, minutes of Council meetings, school newsletters, school and district memoranda, reports from the Council to the district, and other Council documents.

Analysis of Data

Throughout this study, analysis of data guided future data collection (Spradley, 1980). According to Spradley (1980), whose Developmental Research Sequence I used in this study, "Analysis is the search for patterns" (p. 85). To identify patterns, Spradley suggested four levels of analysis: (a) domain analysis, (b) taxonomic analysis, (c) componential analysis, and (d) theme analysis. I first identified domains, or categories, of meaning. For example, kinds of teacher responsibilities and kinds of collegial interactions were two domains in this study. Second, I constructed taxonomies in order to discover subsets and relationships of elements within the domains. Third, I carried out componential analysis. That is, I identified attributes in order to delineate dimensions of contrast between categories. This level of analysis helped me to clarify dimensions of contrast in the SDM experiences of teachers. Fourth, I searched for themes that clarified the relationships among domains.

Teacher Role Change Defined

In this study, I define role in terms of three dimensions. First, a role is a "cluster of duties, rights, and obligations associated with a particular social position" (Hewitt, 1988, p. 79). Second, individuals' self-concepts are often tied to their dominant roles (Zurcher, 1983). Third, people's interactions with others help to define their roles (Bredemeier, 1979; Hewitt, 1988). To report the findings of this study, I discuss changes

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[1]Two of the performers retired before February, 1992. Although incomplete, their data sets provided useful information.

in each of these three dimensions of teachers' roles.

In one section I explore changes in teachers' rights and responsibilities during SDM. Traditionally teachers have not had the right to engage in school decisions or the responsibility for such decisions (Lortie, 1975). In recent years teachers' control over their work has diminished further as mandated reforms have imposed constraints on teachers' instructional decision making (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986; Wise, 1979). Scholars have predicted that SDM will increase teachers' rights and responsibilities (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Elmore, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Raywid, 1990). The Carnegie Report, for example, called on schools "to provide a professional environment for teaching" (p. 3) in which teachers would have greater control over decisions affecting their work and would be held accountable for their decisions.

In another section I examine personal changes perceived by teachers during SDM. Traditionally teaching has been an individualistic pursuit in which teachers have been isolated from their colleagues. This isolation has had profound effects on teachers' development (Lortie, 1975). It has limited teachers' understandings of their craft and of school matters and has contributed to teachers' uncertainty about the quality of their work. Teachers' uncertainty has discouraged their engagement in cooperative situations and the conflict and criticism potentially brought on by collaboration (Lortie, 1975). SDM advocates believe it will end teacher isolation and provide opportunities for teachers to increase their understandings of teaching and school problems (Lieberman, 1988; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Maeroff, 1988). Involvement in decision making may also enhance teachers' sense of efficacy and enable them to work in collaborative situations that expose them to conflict and criticism (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

In another section I discuss teachers' perceptions of their relationships with other role partners. As noted above, advocates believe SDM will reduce the traditional isolation of teaching and will increase teacher collegiality (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). In addition, it will change relationships between principals and teachers by making them colleagues in decision making (Johnson, 1990).

By focusing on these three broad dimensions of role I document teachers' perceptions of their role changes during SDM's implementation at Silver Hill. Before examining those changes, however, I discuss SDM communication problems and the consequences of those problems. Communication proved to be an important influence on teacher role change at Silver Hill. Communication affected teachers' perceptions of changes in their rights and responsibilities, their understandings about SDM and school change, and their relationships with other role partners. After the communication section I discuss changes in teachers' perceptions of their rights and responsibilities. In the third section I examine changes in teachers' perceptions of their understandings and themselves. The fourth section is a

discussion of teachers' perceptions of changes in their relationships, and the fifth section is a summary and discussion of teacher role change at Silver Hill.

As noted above, I identified 14 key respondents in this study as either performers, audience, or outsiders (Goffman, 1973). I use pseudonyms only for those 14 teachers and the principal. I call the performers Pat, Paul, Pauline, Peggy, Pete, and Phyllis; the audience members Alice, Ann, Arlene, and Audrey; and the outsiders Olivia, Olga, Opal, and Oralee.

Communication Problems and Their Consequences

When Silver Hill began SDM, most teachers were involved either formally or informally in a conversation about the meaning and goals of SDM. There were several faculty meetings that focused on SDM and a needs assessment process that involved all teachers. Within a short time, however, SDM became a Council activity. From that point on, SDM became increasingly distant for many teachers. For most, communication was either nonexistent or very formal. When they received communication, it was in the form of published minutes or memoranda and brief announcements at meetings. Teachers made the following comments about communication:

> A lot of people . . . don't have a clue to what's going on.
>
> I think most of the teachers are in the dark about what they are doing.
>
> Nobody is asking me, "What do you think about this [SDM issue]?" . . . Nobody is asking me anything.

The majority of the audience and outsiders I interviewed reported that they were "in the dark" about SDM. Numerous reasons were offered for communication problems. Opal said, "I'm not trying to blame the Council. It's just that there is so much work and so little time. Everyone is so busy with everything else." Beginning teachers especially were overwhelmed by other responsibilities and concerns. Teachers and administrators also noted that high faculty turnover placed additional demands on communication, because new teachers did not understand SDM or its history at Silver Hill. Some staff complained that the split campus and the size of the faculty exacerbated communication problems. Administrators commented that Silver Hill was becoming a "corporation," and the principal noted several times in 1991-1992 that he felt more like a CEO than a principal. In February, 1991, one administrator stated,

> We are starting to become a corporation, and . . . there is going to have to be some sort of networking down. . . . The Council needs to . . . put it in writing, . . . whatever the discussion was, . . . put that document out to every person

on the staff monthly.

Indeed, SDM at Silver Hill needed "some sort of networking." However, distributing a monthly "document" to all staff would not have solved SDM's communication problems. Ann once noted that teachers at Silver Hill "get memos on top of memos on top of memos." Some interview respondents commented disdainfully about the Council's written communication. One teacher noted,

> We get our little memos. . . . Obviously they discuss things for a long period of time, but then all of a sudden it comes out to us, . . . "As of this day you're changing."

Minutes, newsletters, and memoranda informed teachers about what the Council had done, but they did not involve faculty in discussions about school issues, and they did not provide a mechanism for faculty to express their views. To accomplish those ends, communication had to be face-to-face. Further, there were indications that the most effective communication occurred in informal contexts. When I asked Ann in November, 1991, how she would proceed if she wanted to inititate a change at Silver Hill, she answered,

> Well, I would go to Tammy, who was in the library last year. She's no longer with us. . . This year I would say that I'm not really aware of a lot of things as I was before because Tammmy was across the hall from me. . . . We're not really attuned to what's going on or what they're doing. . . . As far as that goes, I see a decline in that. . . because Tammy was next to me so there was more input. She would come to me and she would talk to me about it.

Having identified Ann in May, 1991, as a part of the audience, I was surprised to learn in November that she had become an outsider simply because her SDM informant had left the school. As I reflected about Ann's change in SDM status, I realized that she was confirming a suspicion that I had about effective SDM communication: that some teachers were members of the audience by virtue of their informal contacts with Council members. One teacher said, "I think it's better when you have someone [a Council member] to talk to every day. . . . We have somebody from our team who is on SDM now, and I talk to her all the time." When I ate lunch in the teachers' lounge at the annex in November, 1991, I learned that some of the teachers who were best informed about SDM regularly ate lunch with Council representatives.

I also learned over time that teachers at certain grade levels were better informed than most of their peers. In interviews these teachers reported that their Council representatives communicated with them personally or in team meetings about SDM business.

The split campus affected communication, especially for

certain teachers. Those whose representatives were on the other campus were less likely to be informed about SDM. According to one teacher,

> If she were here, we probably would tell her what our grade-level concerns were. Whereas, . . . I know that there are people here that I can go speak to. I don't know if being on a different grade means that they don't relate to what I'm saying or if they'll say, "Well, that's kind of . . . Let's put that on the back burner because there are more important issues." You always tend to feel more comfortable with someone who's going through what you're going through.

Two fundamental communication problems emerged during SDM's implementation. First, the Council did not effectively communicate SDM business to faculty and staff. SDM was a new system of governance, and teachers knew little about it. Most teachers were interested in learning about SDM and the Council's decisions. SDM placed greater demands on communication systems than traditional school governance required. In hierarchical school organizations, teachers typically learn about decisions after they have been made--and then only when decisions involve them directly. In contrast, SDM requires that stakeholders be informed during the decision-making process. SDM advocates have asserted that teachers will broaden their perspectives and understandings of school problems and will accept responsbility for the success of the entire school program when they participate in school decisions. For those changes to occur, however, teachers must sense that they are participating--even if indirectly--in decision making. To increase their understandings of school problems, they must be informed about the issues that arise during decision making. They need to be aware of the tradeoffs that occur and the reasons for those compromises as the decision-making group progresses from divisiveness to consensus on difficult issues.

A second communication problem--in some ways related to the first--was that many teachers did not perceive their views were welcomed. They either feared that candid expression would result in negative consequences or that the Council was not interested in their ideas. Again, communication systems that were adequate for traditional school governance were not for SDM. Top-down systems do not require that staff have an open conduit to communicate with people above them in the hierarchy. SDM requires that all stakeholders have a mechanism for expressing their views to those who ultimately make the decisions.

Communication was adequate for two groups of teachers. One group consisted of those who had informal contacts with Council representatives. Informal communication provided a means for them to learn about SDM and to express their views to decision makers. A second group included teachers whose Council representatives communicated directly with their constituents. Only a few Council members recognized and actively performed that

responsibility. By relating SDM activities to their peers in team meetings, they informed their colleagues and provided a small-group forum in which teachers felt comfortable sharing their views.

Council members' ineffective communication may have been related to the faculty's collective definition of SDM. Faculty stated in February, 1990, that they were "in the trenches" and therefore knew what needed to be done to improve their school. By having teachers in positions of decision-making authority, the faculty could be assured that the views of those "on the front lines" were represented. Further, their initial experiences with SDM in the spring of 1990 convinced them of the need to implement it through a representative form of governance. SDM was not viewed as a way to increase the faculty's collective understandings or their commitment to decisions. Rather, it was a way for a group of teachers to make better decisions than administrators alone could make. Council members may have assumed that active and ongoing communication with the rest of the staff was unnecessary. They understood the concerns of their colleagues and would render decisions in teachers' best interests. When they had made decisions, then they would share them with the rest of the faculty.

The Council's perception of its role may have constrained the involvement of the majority of Silver Hill's staff in SDM. If Council members believed that they alone were responsible for implementing SDM, they limited other teachers' opportunities to accept new responsibilities and to contribute opinions and ideas.

Changes in Teachers' Rights and Responsibilities

The experience of SDM differed greatly among performers, audience, and outsiders at Silver Hill. Teachers' levels of involvement influenced the degree to which SDM brought them new responsibilities.

New Responsibilities

One goal of Silver Hill's School Improvement Plan for 1990-1991 was to revise the school's curriculum to make it more appropriate for its unique student population. Every teacher was a member of at least one curriculum revision committee. Each committee worked to produce new curricula in a particular subject area. During 1990-1991, some teachers stated that they worked for days on curriculum revision. By the end of the year, most of the committees had accumulated vast amounts of material related to their subject areas but had not yet produced usable curriculum guides. Faculty and staff did not revive the curriculum effort in the following year, and the work remained unfinished in May, 1992. Although the committees did not produce revised curriculum guides, teachers believed they had assumed responsibilities in a new decision domain. Phyllis noted that faculty were able to "look at [their] curriculum and . . . say, 'This is what we want in our curriculum to really cope with our children and their

learning styles.'" Audrey talked about her contribution to committee efforts to integrate music, art, and physical education with other curricula.

The faculty and staff's inability to complete the curriculum revision may be attributed in part to their attempt to accomplish too much too soon. In February, 1991, a Council member commented,

> While we didn't think our plan was overly ambitious, except maybe in the area of the curriculum, . . . we didn't think we were biting off all that much, but apparently we did. We bit off big chunks. Because a lot of the stuff we wanted to do has not gotten done.

One change that resulted from SDM was the participation of faculty in interviewing and hiring new teachers. When a teaching position was being filled, faculty who taught in that grade or subject area could volunteer to participate in the selection process. All of the teachers who talked with me about this new faculty role praised the change. Many stated that it enabled them to select teachers who would be compatible with the Silver Hill staff. Ann noted that there was a shift of responsibility from administrators to teachers:

> I think it's . . . made me more aware of the types of problems administrators have, in trying to hire the best person for the position. . . . If this person doesn't work out, it's the group's fault. It's not the principal's or the assistant principal's. You worked on it, this is your problem, and . . . that's it. . . . You really do kind of respect the administrators. . . what they go through in that type of thing. And that part of their responsibility is [now shared with teachers].

Teacher participation in hiring was one of the few SDM activities that was not exclusively in the Council's domain. Performers, audience, and outsiders could participate in the process, although not as many outsiders mentioned their involvement.

Other SDM responsibilities were not shared equally among performers, audience, and outsiders. In November, 1991, I asked the key respondents to describe the multiple tasks that teachers perform. A short time later, I asked them to define their roles as teachers. Only two teachers--both performers--discussed responsibilities outside of their classroom teaching. Pauline, who had become a Council representative a few months earlier, stated,

> I think that I should be concerned about the whole school, instead of just my own affairs. My class is my main responsibility. I don't think my responsibility should stop right there. I should be concerned with every aspect of the

> whole program and . . . be responsible, or at least knowledgeable, [about] what is going on in the school.

I asked Pauline if her involvement in SDM had made her more conscious of schoolwide matters. She responded,

> I think it has, because . . . last year when I came, I guess I kind of stayed within my class. . . . I think that shared decision making has made me more aware of what is going on in the school, because I'm aware of problems of teachers in the upper grades because they have problems relating to reading. . . . right now it doesn't necessarily affect me, but I do listen to their problems. This year I'm listening more to their problems in their classrooms, other than the problems that concern just my level.

Pauline, an early childhood teacher, attributed her increased concern for reading problems in the upper grades to her involvement in discussions about the school's 5-year goals. Although she had taught at several grade levels during her 30-year career, she spoke throughout our November, 1991 interview of becoming more concerned about schoolwide issues since her recent election to the Council.

Paul, who was an active and outspoken member of the Council, was the other respondent who discussed SDM as a part of his teaching role. He stated,

> School involvement . . . is important. I don't think any teacher really gets a full understanding of what a school is about and what it's there for unless they somehow get involved in things other than their own classroom situation.

The paucity of remarks about SDM by key respondents, especially by the other four performers, puzzled me as I conducted interviews in November, 1991. After all, I was the evaluator for SDM at Silver Hill, and these teachers had been called away from their work to discuss SDM with me. Although I always worked to make our interviews informal and conversational, I had asked the respondents to describe the multiple tasks of teaching immediately after turning on the tape recorder to begin our interviews. I was certain that their consciousness of my role as an SDM evaluator would elicit responses about SDM and schoolwide activities. When they talked exclusively about classroom activities, I asked each of them if they had responsibilities outside the classroom. Even then, none referred to SDM. Phyllis, a performer who was viewed by most faculty as a key SDM leader, stated,

> I've had many responsibilities outside of the classroom. I've done productions, like plays. I've been on the parent advisory committee. I've done things in the community. . . . And all of it comes back in one package, all of my school

work.

Curiously, Phyllis did not mention SDM as a part of her teaching role even after my probing. When I asked her about SDM activities, however, she talked at length about her involvement and provided me with many insights into its progress at Silver Hill.

When I conducted these interviews in November, 1991, I expected that outsiders--and even audience members--would say little about SDM activities as they discussed their teaching roles. During 1990-91, SDM had become more exclusively a Council activity. Almost all audience and outsiders I interviewed that year complained about ineffective SDM communication. By November, 1991, some audience members had become outsiders, and almost everyone outside the Council knew less about SDM activities than they had in the spring of 1990.

However, I was puzzled that four of the six performers did not mention SDM. After analysis and reflection, I concluded that these teachers thought of SDM and teaching as separate activities. Phyllis' interviews illustrate this point. SDM was an important part of her professional life, and in our four interviews she often mentioned how much time she committed to that work. Other faculty also discussed Phyllis' involvement in SDM. However, my probes about her teaching responsibilities outside the classroom did not prompt her to discuss SDM activities as a part of her teaching role. Like Phyllis, three other performers talked at length about their work with children when I asked about their teaching responsibilities. They too were proud of their work in SDM, but when they were asked to talk about their teaching roles, they thought only of what they did with children. The response of these performers may explain in part why researchers have concluded that SDM does not change teachers' roles.

When I specifically asked performers about SDM, they all discussed new responsibilities. Paul and Peggy talked about planning and conducting SDM meetings. Paul and Pat led the effort to acquire a grant for staff development and to implement the Council's efforts to improve trust. Phyllis had been instrumental at the beginning of SDM by playing a key role in writing the governance plan and the first two school improvement plans. She was the most active of all Council members in communicating SDM business to her team members and in eliciting their input. Members of her team were among the few teachers outside the Council who were well informed about SDM. Pete often discussed his initiative to modify the report card for bilingual students. Other faculty also acknowledged his effort, noting that Pete was the only non-Council faculty member at Silver Hill to have spearheaded a major SDM initiative. He asked to be on the Council agenda and presented his proposal. He then surveyed teachers of bilingual classes and arranged meetings with them to devise a new reporting system. Last, he appeared before the district screening committee to request a waiver permitting the

use of an alternate report card.

An important responsibility which fell exclusively to Council members (Pete is the only performer who was not a Council representative) was formulating the school's long-range goals and its annual school improvement plans. In May, 1990, Pat said of her Council role, "You have to be responsible to the community and to the decision-making council and to the teachers." In May, 1991, an administrator at Silver Hill also noted,

> They [Council members] are becoming a power entity and a leadership entity. I think that they were mulling away last spring, getting bogged down with housekeeping chores and day-to-day events at Silver Hill. I see them now . . . perceiving their role more as giving goals and leadership to the whole faculty, the whole staff.

Although the Council had been slow in developing a vision that would guide SDM at Silver Hill, they were responsible for providing goals for the faculty and staff. That leadership role was rarely acknowledged by teachers, particularly outsiders, as an important accomplishment of SDM. In part, teachers may have underestimated the importance of that function because the formulation of long-range educational goals does not result in immediate, tangible, and obvious change. Nonetheless, the development of school goals was perhaps the most important responsibility assumed by the Council. As noted earlier, Pauline's involvement in that activity broadened her perspective of school affairs and increased her concern for the school's total academic program.

Teachers in the audience assumed fewer responsibilities than performers. Consistent with the faculty's collective definition of SDM as a representative form of governance, they believed that their role was to provide input to Council members and to be knowledgeable about SDM. However, poor communication limited their participation in both of those ways. When I asked Audrey why she was not more involved in SDM, she replied,

> They don't give us an opportunity to be. We hear no information. We hear when the meetings are and we just don't hear anything from it. We haven't seen anything come out of it. . . . So I guess people feel, . . . "Why put effort in if nothing is being done."

Audrey then noted that her interest and involvement had decreased during the 1991-1992 year because the Council had become less effective in communicating with faculty. When I interviewed her in May, 1991, she was not an active SDM participant but was very interested in the process and enthusiastic about its future. I identified her then as a part of the audience because of her intense interest. By November, 1991, it was clear that she was becoming an outsider. Alice, Arlene, and Ann also complained that they knew less about SDM in

1991-1992. Ann believed that she was becoming an outsider because the Council member who had kept her informed during the previous year had changed schools. As communication became less effective, the distinction between audience and outsiders became blurred. Increasingly, the audience diminished and the faculty consisted almost entirely of Council members and outsiders. The one responsibility assumed by audience members that distinguished them from outsiders was the provision of input to the Council, but failed communication made it difficult for them to carry out that responsibility.

Outsiders assumed less responsibility than the audience. They were less informed about SDM and did not provide their views to the Council. A few outsiders (in addition to the four key respondents) said to me during interviews that they did not know why they were being interviewed because they knew nothing about SDM. Most stated that SDM was floundering. They reported that it had few, if any, achievements, and that it had not affected them or changed their teaching roles.

New Rights

Providing input into decisions was for teachers at Silver Hill both a responsibility and a right. When the school began SDM, everyone I interviewed agreed that it would give teachers more say in decisions. Two years later, the majority of the teachers I interviewed believed SDM gave faculty the right to voice their concerns and opinions more openly. However, one group of teachers did not perceive that they could exercise that right with impunity. Another group believed SDM had failed to provide a mechanism for them to communicate their concerns to the Council.

Some teachers believed that they could not afford to "make waves" by expressing views that administrators did not hold. Most of these teachers were annual-contract teachers who in an uncertain budget year feared that speaking out would endanger their continued employment. When I reported that sentiment to the faculty, performers were surprised. Among them were those who shared Pete's perceptions of SDM:

> I feel I have an equal say in anything that goes on at Silver Hill. Any suggestion I have gets heard, any changes I want to make get heard, and I feel like I'm part of the leadership in the school.

Pete often talked about his efforts to change the bilingual report card through SDM. Even though his proposal had not made it past the SDM Steering Committee, he believed that shared governance gave him a way to express his concerns. When I asked him how he would have proposed a change in the absence of SDM, he stated,

> I probably wouldn't have done a thing, to be perfectly honest. I would have just accepted it and that would have

been it. I wouldn't have tried. With shared decision making, I felt like I could be heard.

A second group of teachers perceived that failed communication systems did not allow them to express their views. The majority of outsiders and audience shared the perception of the beginning teacher who stated in February, 1991,

> I don't know about the other teachers, what's happened with them, but as far as I can remember I haven't been asked my opinion by anyone on the Council, or I haven't been made aware of anything they are voting on before they vote. . . . Some teachers don't care and so they don't want to be involved. But teachers who do care should have an easy way of having access to the Council.

In contrast to Pete, this teacher did not perceive that she had access to the Council. She and others, including members of the audience, believed that SDM provided a way for Council members to be heard, but not other faculty. Unlike Pete, who acted on his concern about the bilingual report card and requested a place on the Council's agenda, these teachers suggested that Council members should seek out their opinions. The reasons for the differences in these teachers' perceptions of their right of access to SDM are not clear--and are probably varied. However, one possible explanation is that the Council's infrequent and ineffective communication with staff suggested to some teachers that they were not free to offer unsolicited views. Further, as noted earlier, failed communication restricted the participation of most nonperformers by limiting their knowledge of SDM activities and their understanding of the process.

In summary, teachers' perceptions of their new rights varied greatly. Performers believed that SDM enabled them to state their opinions openly and to participate actively in changing their school. In contrast, most audience and outsiders did not share these perceptions.

Personal Understandings and Changes in Self-Perceptions

During the implementation of SDM at Silver Hill, teachers reported personal changes because of their involvement in the process. They believed they gained understandings through their involvement in SDM and changed the way they perceived themselves. Personal understandings are important because they may enhance teachers' ability to lead and to carry out school change.

Personal Understandings

During the second year of SDM, the majority of the teachers I interviewed reported that they had learned about the difficulty and slowness of school improvement. They stated,

> It's gradual, and it's going to take time, and you just have

to keep going with it. (Paul)

> Change takes time and you can't expect miracles. I think that is what we were expecting. Too many things happening at once. We were expecting that miracle. (Ann)

> I have learned that it's very, very difficult to change things. It takes a long time. (Opal)

As these quotes indicate, teachers at all levels of SDM involvement learned that change is slow and complex. In addition, performers, audience, and outsiders stated in the spring of 1992 that school improvement requires the support of all school personnel. Many shared that sentiment in May, 1992, after the Council conducted trust-building and team-building activities. For the first time since SDM's implementation, interview respondents emphasized that all staff, including cafeteria and custodial workers, office staff, and paraprofessionals, should be involved in SDM and in carrying out school change.

Teachers at each level of SDM involvement said they gained these two understandings, but audience and outsiders said they had learned little else from the process. In contrast, some performers believed that they had improved their leadership skills. Paul noted, "A lot of skills are developed while you are on the Council: leadership ability, public speaking and communication, ability to get along with others, . . . implement[ation] procedures, organization." Peggy stated that she learned how to plan, organize, and conduct meetings.

Performers also gained understandings about school affairs that most other faculty did not have. Several performers stated that they learned about budgeting. Paul noted that he learned much about the school's policies, and Pete believed that he learned about the district's policies. Peggy stated that she increased her awareness of school matters. She believed SDM encouraged her to be informed about school issues so that she could discuss them with colleagues. Pat observed that to win acceptance for her ideas she had learned to support them "with viable reasons." She went on to explain, "You can have, . . . a good idea, but you have to . . . make it broad enough and appealing enough" for it to be approved.

Several performers believed that they broadened their perspectives about school problems. Performers said,

> It's not as easy as it looks on the outside. . . . You have to try to get everybody's needs, but at the same time keep a straight path ahead of you. You can't wander off and do just what this person wants. (Peggy)

> You have to watch out for everybody. You can't just watch out for kindergarten. (Pat)

> I see things from [administrators'] viewpoint. . . . I don't necessarily agree with it, but I hear it now, and that's one step more than people that were just on the staff would get. (Paul)

A teacher who served on the Council during 1990-1991 also indicated that Council members altered their perspectives of school dilemmas. As she described a Council meeting in which the principal explained the school office's organization, she recalled,

> He explained the way it was done, the way it was, and everybody sat there and said, "Oh, I never saw it that way." Because he was seeing it from the perspective of the principal in charge of the school, and [Council members] were seeing it from the classroom. And when he explained it . . . , they said, "You need to go to everybody else and explain it to them. . . . That makes a lot of sense."

I do not know if the principal explained his rationale for office organization to the remainder of the staff and in doing so received their commitment to a decision that he believed best served the interests of the collective body. If so, no one ever mentioned it to me. Although audience and outsiders often stated that the principal shared his views with them, they did not suggest that they altered their perspectives of school problems as performers did.

Performers asserted in 1992 that it was important for them to take responsibility for implementing their decisions. Council members agreed in February and May of 1992 that SDM meant more than teachers and staff making decisions; it also meant they had to carry out those decisions. Pat noted,

> You still have to . . . follow through on whatever decisions you've made. And we're just realizing how important it is, because we'll come up with something . . . and we don't do a timeline, we don't know who's going to be responsible for it, and we come back three meetings later and we go, "Oh yeah. We said we were going to do that." We just kind of expect the SDM genie to fix it for us, I guess.

Most Council members I interviewed in May, 1992, talked about the importance of their involvement in implementing decisions. However, no teacher made that assertion prior to the spring of 1992. This change in perspective involved only performers and occurred more than two years after SDM began. The faculty's initial definition of SDM helps explain their difficulty in achieving that understanding. Almost everyone agreed in February, 1990, that SDM would give teachers more input, but no teacher stated that faculty would have the opportunity to carry out change. One of the union stewards, a teacher whom others credited with persuading the faculty to

accept SDM, stated in February, 1990, "We know how to sit down and make suggestions. Now, the next step we're ready for is to have our suggestions put into effect." During its first two years at Silver Hill, SDM seemed to be stymied as teachers waited for decisions to be "put into effect" and administrators complained that teachers were not assuming responsibility for implementing decisions. In May, 1992, performers were redefining SDM and suggesting that their role in implementation would be more active.

Changes in Performers' Perceptions of Themselves

At the end of SDM's second year, several performers stated that SDM had altered their self-perceptions. Some Council members said that they gained confidence, became more secure about sharing their views, and felt more important because of their role in SDM. One stated,

> I haven't always been an outspoken person, but to be on the Council, . . . then what I think, feel, say is just as important as any other person. So I am more apt now to speak up than maybe times past.

A paraprofessional who served on the first Council noted in May, 1990, that she was concerned at first that others would not respect her views. She added, "If they chose me, . . . what I have to say is just as important as anyone else. And everyone makes you feel so important . . . . I don't feel that I'm just a paraprofessional."

A teacher who was elected to the Council in 1991 reflected the feelings of most performers when she said, "The thing that surprised me is that when I speak at the meeting, other people listen. That was kind of new to me, helps me be a little more confident." Paul expressed a similar sentiment: "I always feel like when I'm talking [in Council meetings] people are listening. And that makes me feel that I am an important . . . element to the SDM Council." Peggy also said she gained confidence on the Council and was no longer afraid to express her views.

Other staff confirmed these performers' self-assessments of personal change. When I asked an assistant principal in May, 1992, if new leaders were emerging in SDM, she stated,

> One I had in mind was not [a leader before SDM], has grown a great deal. The other one was sort of a leader before, very, very quiet, laid back, subdued. [She] is speaking up more. I think that has helped her. . . . Each one has gained self-confidence, and they do have the respect of other faculty members. It has been interesting watching. [They are] very dedicated and doing a fantastic job.

These assertions indicate that SDM was influential in increasing performers' confidence and their ability to become

more vocal leaders. The only nonperformer who perceived that kind of change in herself was Olivia. She noted that her work on curriculum revision committees helped her to overcome her shyness because she was able to "intermingle more with the teachers and . . . have more input."

A second change that performers attributed to SDM was an enhanced sense of efficacy associated with their belief that SDM enabled them to enact fundamental school reform. Arlene first gave me a sense of performers' increased efficacy when she observed in May, 1991, "It just seems . . . when you see the group coming for the meeting. . . they seem really gung-ho. . . . You see them walking in and out of meetings saying, 'Well, let's do this and this.'" Arlene was an enthusiastic observer of SDM performers. When she shared the observation above, she seemed to share performers' hopefulness about the potential of SDM, and the "gung-ho" attitude of the Council clearly buoyed her morale. However, as a nonperformer, she was the exception in terms of her enthusiasm in May, 1991. By November, 1991, even her enthusiasm had begun to wane as SDM communication floundered and faculty saw little tangible evidence of the Council's efforts. By that time, few audience or outsiders believed strongly in SDM's effectiveness. In contrast, performers made these statements:

> Eventually we'll be hiring the principal or deciding what specials areas we need or don't need. . . . There's a lot of things [that] could be technically done by shared decision making in the really pretty near future. (Pat)

> I think a lot of us don't realize the power that we have. It's not laid out or etched out for us in stone, but I'm personally starting to get the feeling that there is a lot more that we can do that we don't do. (Paul)

> I feel there's no limit on what you can do. (Pete)

Performers frequently stated that their sense of SDM's possibilities became clearer because of their involvement. Paul said, "A lot of people don't have a full grasp and understanding of what SDM could do." A paraprofessional who served on the first Council suggested the relationship between communication and the staff's understanding of SDM's potential in February, 1991:

> We're trying . . . to set up our minutes at each meeting and . . . put it up in the lounge for teachers to read and look at. Because other than that, they really don't know exactly what we're doing. And some of them, I don't think, are aware of what can be accomplished with shared decision making.

According to this Council member, effective communication increases faculty understanding of SDM, and understanding leads

to an enhanced sense of SDM's potential. However, without effective communication, understandings about SDM and its potential were limited to performers. New Council members said they were surprised to learn that SDM provided a vehicle for change. In May, 1992, a teacher who had joined the Council that year stated, "If I had to think of a surprise, it would be that things can be changed." She then alluded to another SDM school's decision to use portfolio assessment, adding that she didn't know that SDM enabled teachers to explor that option. When she described the Council's discussions about waiver requests, she noted, "Before I was on the Shared Decision Making [Council], I didn't know that we could do all sorts of things." Later in the same interview, as she talked about school improvement, this teacher of 25 years observed, "Now I'm empowered to do something about it, whereas before I don't think I ever felt that way."

Teachers' Relationships

This examination of teachers' relationships during SDM has three parts. Each section is a discussion of teachers' relationships with a particular set of role partners. I include separate discussions of (a) colleagues, (b) school administrators, and (c) district administrators.

Collegial Relationships

SDM performers were more likely than audience or outsiders to perceive changes in their relationships with other teachers. However, changes in performers' relationships with nonperformers imply that the latter group's relationships also changed, even if those changes were more subtle and less substantial than they were for performers.

Audience and outsiders experienced a few changes in their relationships with peers. Staff hiring and curriculum revision were SDM activities in which all teachers could participate, and the changes that audience and outsiders perceived were related to these activities. Faculty participation in hiring teachers is in itself a substantive change in teachers' collegial relationships. Administrators have traditionally selected and hired faculty, and the involvement of teachers in the process is a change in teachers' organizational relationships.

As noted earlier, teachers at Silver Hill believed that their participation in hiring enabled them to select teachers who "fit in." Pete expressed a view held by many when he said, "You are going to [have to] work with this person. . . . I think it is important that we be involved [in their selection]." A teacher who described faculty involvement in hiring as SDM's "number one" achievement noted,

> [New teachers hired by Silver Hill faculty] are very responsive to [Silver Hill veterans] and . . . seem pretty relaxed. When they join the staff, they've already seen those faces, and they're able to approach those people a

> little bit better. . . . So I think it works out to be a big plus, that they feel they've been really welcomed at our school.

This respondent suggested that teachers' participation in hiring strengthened the bonds between new faculty and those who selected them. Others agreed:

> [New faculty and the teachers who selected them have] become friendly. We have a good rapport with each other. (Opal)

> [New faculty] are real energetic, and they are really going to do things. . . . It was really nice to get to know these people through the interview. . . . One in particular was so nervous [during the interview] we wanted to go to her and say, "It's all right. You're doing fine. Don't worry about it.". . . When we rated the [candidates], our decision was unanimous for the three of them. We really jelled. (Ann)

Ann's comments indicate that teachers participating in interviewing and selection of colleagues were enthusiastic about, and empathetic toward, their new peers. Her statement that teachers on the selection committee "really jelled" also suggested that collegial bonds among committee members were strengthened.

A teacher who worked as a substitute at Silver Hill before being hired by a committee of teachers stated,

> I appreciated that immensely because I had already come and known several of the teachers, and I felt like they had a pretty good handle on what my style was and . . . my love for the children. . . . The principal may only see you once or twice. He actually had come in and observed me once for five minutes. But he doesn't see me every day, and these teachers see me in the hall, they see me with the kids, and they hear the kids talk about me.

This teacher agreed with the assessment of most teachers who participated as interviewers in the hiring process. Faculty believed that they could identify exemplary teachers for Silver Hill. Given the isolation of teaching and the lack of time for collaboration (Lortie, 1975), it is questionable that the settings (e.g., the hall) in which other faculty were able to observe the teacher quoted above provided a thorough assessment of her teaching ability. Nonetheless, her approval of the process may indicate that teachers are more receptive to their colleagues' assessments than they are to administrators'.

Teacher collaboration on curriculum revision committees may also have altered collegial relationships. In February, 1991, Olivia said,

> I think it's [SDM] brought the teachers a little bit closer

> together. . . . I certainly have myself become more familiar with certain other teachers. . . . There are quite a few groups . . . now working together, like language arts, reading committees and different things like that. . . . I really get to intermingle more with the teachers.

In November, 1991, Olivia again spoke of teacher collaboration on curriculum committees. She spoke proudly of her expertise in reading and noted that she and other committee members had shared ideas and materials with one another. She added that since SDM she and her colleagues talked more frequently about strategies for teaching reading.

Olivia was the only teacher who discussed changes in her collegial relationships as a result of her work on curriculum committees. It is possible that others experienced those changes even though they did not mention them in interviews. As I noted earlier, most teachers immediately referred to the work of the Council when I asked them about SDM. The effort to revise curricula was initiated through SDM, but few respondents seemed to regard it as an SDM activity. Olivia provided the response above when I asked what SDM had accomplished. Performers usually responded to that question by talking about the work of the Council. Most others usually stated that SDM was not accomplishing anything. They may not have regarded the curriculum work as an achievement because those efforts never resulted in completed curriculum guides. Moreover, although only Olivia mentioned changed collegial relationships through collaborative work on curriculum committees, these changes were important to her. Such changes may have occurred to other teachers even though they did not mention them in our interviews.

Performers were especially emphatic about changes in their relationships with other performers. One teacher noted that the Council had developed "a real camaraderie." Council members stated that they built collegial bonds through SDM and learned much about fellow representatives. According to a Council member, "You get a chance to sit with some people and get to know them on a more personal level, because when we teach . . . all day, . . . we don't get to know our peers as people."

When I observed a Council meeting in May, 1991, I was especially impressed by the manner in which representatives defused and worked through potentially conflictive situations, often by using humor. Council members stated that they had learned through SDM that conflict was healthy and did not prevent consensus:

> One of the most important things is to really be able to listen to both sides of things. . . . to think, "Okay. This is the way I see this issue." But then when somebody else makes a few points, . . . "Okay. I can see that argument. . . . I can live with that." (Pat)

> You have to learn to give and take. . . .We all have to

> learn to just give respect to one another and that no idea is ever too stupid or too far-fetched. (Paul)

A paraprofessional on the Council also noted, "There are times when we do clash, but we get back on task and even if . . . one or two . . . disagree, we eventually come together." Moreover, teachers on the Council learned that criticism of their ideas was not personal criticism. As early as May, 1990, a Council member remarked, "Nobody's afraid to say things to each other . . . that might ruffle a few feathers. Heck, let's ruffle them out, and then we'll smooth them out." Council members had learned to build consensus among a group that held widely divergent views. In fact, the Council's motto--which was printed on t-shirts given to the staff for the 1992 team-building activities--was, "Can you live with it?"

In contrast, no outsiders and only one audience member talked about these understandings. Only Ann stated of her collegial relationships, "I learned that you can express your feelings, and they take it in a nice way and not a critical way."

Another change in performers' collegial relationships was that some teachers began to seek them out to ask questions or share input about SDM. As noted earlier, communication between the Council and other faculty was generally poor. However, a few Council members worked to inform their grade-level peers about SDM. Phyllis, for example, regularly discussed SDM with her colleagues at team meetings. She remarked in November, 1991, that teachers sought information from her more often after she became a Council member. Other teachers learned about SDM through informal contacts with Council representatives. Peggy, who sometimes discussed SDM at lunchtime in the teachers' lounge, noted that teachers often asked her questions about school affairs and shared their problems and concerns with her. Oralee, who was a beginning teacher in 1990-1991, stated that she learned about SDM through conversations at lunch and in the lounge. She added that she had established informal relationships with several teachers through these conversations.

Some performers worried that other teachers resented their role. Pat stated in February, 1991, "There is a bit of jealousy. I think teachers that aren't on it are frustrated when you have time off, or you are going here or you are going there." If teachers did resent SDM performers, their belief that SDM was not accomplishing much may have exacerbated that resentment. Alice observed that the Council sometimes had all-day meetings and then added, "You'll walk by and you'll see them still sitting in their meeting, and they don't seem to be doing much of anything." The majority of the Silver Hill staff did not express resentment of Council members. Nonetheless, as one administrator noted, Council members could not be "thinskinned" and endure the occasional criticism of other teachers.

Relationships with the Principal and Assistant Principals

In this section I discuss an unexpected dilemma that SDM

presented to the principal and assistant principals at Silver Hill, and I report an incident that demonstrated the complexity of the dilemma. I also briefly examine assistant principals' roles and the principal's role in SDM. In addition, I report teachers' perceptions of changes in their relationships with administrators.

Silver Hill's administrators faced a complex dilemma in implementing SDM. Like teachers, they were assuming new roles. In addition, administrators had to be extremely sensitive to teachers' perceptions of their behavior. Their actions and statements communicated powerful messages to faculty about their support for teachers' initiatives in the new and uncertain environment of SDM. When I asked a teacher in May, 1991, to share her impressions of SDM, she stated,

> At first I was, like everybody that I know, gung-ho for it. . . . This is our chance to get in there and say something, and it will make a difference. But as it went on, it was like, . . . [admiministrators were saying] "Well, you needed a waiver and chances are the School Board wouldn't give you that waiver if you wanted to make this change." And we got into a lot of arguing about it.

This teacher then noted that she and many of her colleagues had become less enthusiastic about SDM. They believed that their restructuring ideas were not feasible because school administrators would not pursue policy waivers. She added, "It got into a negative thing that . . . was administration against staff. So people started not [discussing decisions] as much, . . . except [for Council members]."

It was not unusual for interview respondents to provide different interpretations of the same incident or comment. The divergence of perceptions, however, seemed to be greatest in instances when an administrator's actions or words implied to some respondents a lack of support for teachers' participation in decision making. As might be expected, administrators' perceptions of these situations differed greatly from those of teachers.

The principal and assistant principals at Silver Hill wanted to push faculty to take on greater challenges in SDM but had to be careful not to appear to preempt teachers' leadership roles. Teachers--and administrators, for that matter--were uncertain about their authority in SDM. If administrators appeared to be taking charge, they ran the risk of defining SDM as "business as usual": that is, as administrators continuing to be in charge. Further, administrators held information to which teachers traditionally had not had access. Principals and assistant principals were more familiar with school, district, and state policies. If they withheld that information, teachers might flounder in their efforts to carry out change. However, if administrators pointed out policy barriers, they might appear to oppose teachers' initiatives or consider them implausible. The

quote above is indicative of that kind of misunderstanding. Last, as the principal noted in February, 1990, ultimately the district held him responsible for whatever happened at Silver Hill. He wondered how he would respond if the Council produced a plan that he could not approve. He stated, "Then I may have to overrule them, and then I can understand how they would feel. 'Hey, what's this shared decision making stuff . . . if you're still going to do this?'"

Supporting teacher role change was for administrators a problematic and ongoing process. At the least, administrators had to be sensitive to teachers' perceptions. They had to reflect upon and assess continuously the way they presented themselves to teachers in SDM contexts. Traditional school governance has not made these demands of administrators, and neither SDM planners in Palmetto County nor the scholarly literature on SDM could have fully prepared Silver Hill's administrators for their complex new roles. Assistant principals in particular struggled with their SDM roles.

An event that occurred early in SDM's implementation demonstrates the complexity of administrators' roles in supporting teacher role change. In May, 1990, the Council presented its first SDM School Improvement Plan to the faculty for approval. The plan focused almost entirely on improving student behavior and did not address curriculum issues. According to numerous teachers, when the plan was presented, one of the assistant principals vehemently protested the omission of curriculum goals. Pat recalled, "Right when it was presented, we had an administrator stand up and say, 'This is worth nothing.'" Pat went on to explain that the Council had considered curriculum issues but decided not to include them because curriculum had not been mentioned by teachers in the needs assessment process. She stated,

> People were talking about discipline, . . . about administrative availability. . . . We decided, "Well, you know, we are really the voice of the faculty here. . . . Are we going to take charge and lead them or are we going to be their voice? So we decided to be their voice.

Because the Council was acting as the voice of the faculty and its first plan received such a negative appraisal from an administrator, many teachers questioned how much authority the faculty would have in SDM. Pete later stated that the incident put "a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths" and "hurt the program." He then noted that teachers asked, "Is this shared decision making?" Two years after the incident, Pete still regarded it as a low point for SDM, and several teachers who discussed assistant principals' roles believed they were fearful of losing their authority through SDM.

The assistant principal who voiced disapproval of the School Improvement Plan had a very different interpretation of her actions. Speaking of her role in SDM, she stated in May, 1991,

> The first year I believe we [assistant principals] were completely ostracized, and then any opinion that we gave, it was felt that we were fearful of losing power or fearful of losing authority. . . . Actually [the other assistant principal] and I were giving opinions and, I thought, constructive criticism.

At the end of the 1990-1991 year, the Council revised its governance plan to include an assistant principal as a member. According to a Council member, the assistant principals had not supported SDM because they "had been left out of the process." The assistant principal quoted above may have reacted as she did because SDM left her feeling excluded from decision making. Or she may have believed sincerely that her criticism was constructive and useful. Whatever her reasons, it is doubtful that she fully anticipated and understood teachers' perceptions of her criticism. As SDM evolved during the following year, some faculty believed that assistant principals became more supportive of the process, but others continued to question that support.

The principal of Silver Hill was more cognizant of the complexity of his role than assistant principals but nonetheless found it difficult to enact. In February, 1991, he expressed frustration that the Council was not assuming a leadership role. He perceived then that he had given teachers too much autonomy and had not shown enough direction because he was concerned that teacher leaders would think he was taking over. In later conversations he reflected further upon that dilemma and questioned whether he was assuming an appropriate leadership role as an SDM principal. My assessment--based upon five interviews with him, other respondents' comments, and observations of him in SDM and other meetings--is that he was sensitive to teachers' perceptions and reflective about his behavior as an SDM principal. Nonetheless, he struggled continually to define his role and questioned his performance in each of our interviews. In May, 1992, he stated,

> I'm trying to figure out how to pull back [so they can] take on some leadership role and authority that I really wanted them to have. And I was trying to get them to take it. I'm trying to figure out now how to [take] some of that back, because I think I let them go too far when they weren't ready. And I'm trying to figure out how to bring them back in, without squashing their enthusiasm. . . . What I don't want to send out is the message, "Y'all haven't done it, so I'm going to take over again." . . . I think I behaved poorly as a new SDM principal. I went too far in turning it all over to them. And I think I probably should have kept on a whole lot and turned it over a little bit at a time.

Later in the same interview Jerry (the principal) stated that SDM had been worthwhile and that the school had changed

because of SDM. He added that he believed SDM would continue to grow and involve people. He reiterated his faith in the faculty's ability to make decisions but again questioned if he had capably facilitated teachers' assumption of leadership.

From the beginning of SDM, teachers acknowledged the principal's support for SDM and his willingness to listen to teachers. Pat was one of several Council members who stated in 1990 that Jerry was willing to share his authority. She recalled, "As Jerry put it to us, 'You sort of know some of my responsibilities. Now what do you want to take part in?'" As another teacher described initial Council meetings, he remarked, "I give [Jerry] all the credit in the world. We did some pretty heavy talking there, and he didn't flinch and didn't bat an eye. . . . He's a savvy guy. He recognizes that what we were saying is true." Several Council members told me in formal interviews and in informal conversations that SDM would flounder if Silver Hill lost its principal. Moreover, there were few issues on which the entire faculty and staff of Silver Hill agreed. One of those was that the principal completely supported their participation in decision making.

How did teachers and other staff come to share the perception that the principal welcomed their participation in decision making? Jerry articulated his own role most clearly in our first interview in February, 1990:

> My initial role . . . is to be a facilitator. In being a facilitator, I see that what I need to do is to enable, to give permission . . . for people to enter into places and arenas that traditionally have not been theirs.

It is difficult to know if Jerry was correct in saying that he gave teachers too much authority too soon. When SDM began at Silver Hill, the faculty's endorsement was overwhelming, and some teachers talked about enacting far-reaching changes. However, it is clear that by giving faculty and staff "permission" to enter into new domains, Jerry provided a requisite condition for SDM success and teacher role change at Silver Hill. There would not have been a consensus that he supported faculty's SDM efforts had he not worked to communicate that teachers could share his authority.

Performers perceived the principal's efforts to share decisions with teachers more clearly than the audience or outsiders. Although all teachers thought he sought faculty input, only performers described his role as that of a "partner" (Phyllis) or said, as Peggy did, "He's not any higher or lower; he's the same as we are." A number of audience and outsiders commented that Council members changed their relationships to the principal more than other teachers. One teacher told me that she was reluctant to express her views in front of administrators but that Council members told her, "Don't feel that way. . . . Administration is pretty much real open at the SDM meetings." If nothing else, SDM performers had more contact with the principal

than nonperformers.

Nonetheless, there were changes in the principal's relationships to audience and outsiders. One way in which Jerry gave all teachers "permission" was by including them in hiring. He, rather than the Council, initiated that process and encouraged teachers to participate. The change in hiring procedures was one indication that he worked harder to share his authority after SDM began. Although he often stated that he had always listened to teachers and shared decisions, many faculty believed that he did more to democratize the school's governance after SDM began. Teachers stated that SDM encouraged him to be more open, more accessible, and more diligent about seeking their input.

Teachers' perceptions of their relationships with school administration influenced teacher role change during SDM's implementation. The principal at Silver Hill helped to define teachers' roles by inviting them to share his authority and responsibilities. Those teachers who participated actively in SDM and believed that they understood its potential perceived that their power extended into all areas of school governance that traditionally belonged to the principal. Similarly, their perceptions of their authority in decision domains that district administrators had traditionally controlled were influenced by the definition of SDM that those administrators projected.

The Faculty and Staff's Relationship to District Administration

When Palmetto County implemented SDM in 1989, it publicized the effort as a strategy for professionalizing teaching and improving student achievement. Beyond a statement of broad goals, the district provided little clarification of teachers' decision domains or authority and little guidance about how to enact SDM. Faculty at Silver Hill were initially uncertain of SDM's meaning but agreed that it gave them input into decisions. Some teachers did not perceive that SDM would increase their decision-making authority significantly. Others suggested that their authority could be broad and far-reaching. Moreover, the district's ambiguity about SDM left teachers to construct their own definitions of SDM, and those varied greatly.

The majority of the teachers I interviewed at Silver Hill did not perceive that district administration fully supported SDM. In my initial SDM interviews, several teachers wondered if the district would waver in its support for SDM. One respondent stated,

> I just hope whoever evaluates the thing, I mean, in the political arena--school boards, administrators, what have you--that they understand that this is a new process, and the teachers are not going to be expected to . . . work overnight miracles. That's my main concern. . . . Will politics kill the thing?

The teachers who questioned district support in February,

1990, included the few whose aspirations for SDM were greatest. Like the teacher quoted above, they seemed in that early stage of SDM to be waiting for the district to signal its commitment.

Teachers received the first indication of the level of district commitment within a few weeks. A district administrator blocked the school's first request to hire substitutes so that the Council could meet during school hours. The principal and Council members--who believed that the superintendent and school board backed SDM strongly--were shocked by the refusal. In the initial excitement of implementing a change strategy that had been publicized widely and that put Palmetto County in the forefront of school reform nationally, the administrative refusal of the school's first real SDM effort was completely incongruous with teachers' expectations. Although the district's SDM support team intervened to gain approval of the request, the damage had been done. Two years later, a teacher described the incident as an early indication of the district's lack of commitment to SDM.

Another event that signalled to teachers that their authority was limited was the district screening committee's denial of Silver Hill's waiver request to alter the report card for bilingual students. The teachers who presented the waiver request believed that the district screening committee judged them to be racist. One of those teachers had been a key SDM leader during its first two years. In May, 1992, he explained that the denial of the waiver request contributed to his decision to curtail his SDM participation:

> After all those hours, all this time, all this work we'd done in terms of building consensus . . . to have someone say, "No. We're not going to do this." I thought, this is an exercise in futility. . . . I honestly felt we weren't getting anywhere with major things that we were going to try to accomplish, . . . beyond [insignificant management decisions or] issues.

Few teachers stated their disillusionment so strongly, but over the two years of this study, many stated that the district would not waive its regulations. Most of the audience and outsiders I interviewed agreed with the teacher who stated,

> From what I've heard, a lot of [the things] people . . . thought . . . were going to happen, did not happen. . . . The time and the effort that people go into these committees with, . . . they feel that after spending a year or so working on this they are stonewalled by such things as, "It's not allowed by county rules and regulations," or "There's no money for it." . . . There's always something in the way.

Did this veteran teacher--and the others who shared her viewpoint--question SDM's potential from the beginning? Or did instances of district nonsupport erode her faith in SDM, as they

did for the teacher quoted before her? Whatever the explanation, it is clear that district administration did not project to teachers a definition of SDM that invited them to restructure their school. By restricting teachers' decision domains, the district also placed a limit on teachers' sense of efficacy as change agents.

Palmetto County's superintendent and school board had publicly expressed their commitment to SDM and to the goal of teacher professionalism. How could district administration have sent such conflicting messages about their support? The reaction of a key district administrator to schools' initial SDM efforts provides some clues. Silver Hill's principal mentioned on several occasions that he received a memorandum from a district administrator in the summer of 1990, stating that "the plans they'd seen were just very basic and only ask[ed] for procedural changes. They were disappointed that they weren't seeing great restructuring kinds of things" (Jerry). Jerry noted that he immediately responded with his own memorandum. As he recalled, "I don't think it's reasonable to ask people who've been immersed in, been a product of, then a part of, a two-hundred-year-old education model . . . and then say, 'Okay. Change it.'"

Apparently, some district administrators believed that SDM would be a catalyst for immediate school restructuring. In retrospect, that expectation was unrealistic. When I conducted my first interviews at Silver Hill in late February, 1990, teachers had just learned that they would be a part of the pilot program. Within a month they had elected their first Council, but only after they struggled with decisions about the makeup of the Council and election procedures. When I telephoned the union steward in mid April, he told me that the Council had convened for only one brief meeting. In that session they compared schedules and tried to determine the best time for the group to have regular meetings. In the next six weeks, they tried to clarify the meaning of SDM, the goals of SDM at their school, and decision domains. They constructed a constitution and a school improvement plan and sought the faculty's approval of those. These accomplishments occurred in April and May, as teachers and admininistrators conducted state-mandated testing, assessed student progress, and contended with all that is required of educators bringing closure to a school year. The suggestion by district administrators that schools should have made fundamental changes within six weeks indicates that they had little understanding of SDM, restructuring, obstacles to school change, or the demands they were placing on SDM participants. District policymakers had engaged in negotiations and discussions leading to the implementation of SDM, but they apparently had not reflected on its meaning or complexities. They failed to see that teachers would not engage in restructuring unless the district administration supported the perception that teachers had that authority. Learning that middle-level bureaucracy blocked a request for six substitutes for one day could not have encouraged teachers to believe that the traditional hierarchical

system of decision making had faded into the past.

The initial refusal of the school's request for substitutes revealed a second problem. Top-level administration had not gained the commitment of middle management for SDM. In February, 1991, a Council member stated,

> There's [an] enormous middle level of bureaucracy in this county. It is huge . . . and we have not ever, ever heard a single word [about SDM from them]. We have never seen their faces at any of our meetings; we have never heard their voices, their opinions. We don't know that these people even have an idea of what SDM is. . . . We do know that, on a few occasions, some of the pilot schools have put in requests. . . . And somebody can sit there behind a desk somewhere and say, "Nope! [Bangs fist on the table] You can't do it!" And that's the end of it! Now tell me, where's the sharing of responsibility?

As this teacher noted, Palmetto County had a large district bureaucracy. Some district administrators supported SDM, but others did not. When I asked Jerry if there were any stumbling blocks to SDM, he responded,

> When a real senior member of the district administration says publicly, "I know about shared decision making. Let me tell you my definition of shared decision making. And that is, I make the decision and share it with you," there's a stumbling block.

The superintendent and school board may have supported SDM, but participants at Silver Hill learned that other levels of administration between them and the superintendent could block their improvement efforts. Teachers who stated, "There's always something in the way," may have expressed a tacit understanding held by many that the educational hierarchy was an obstacle to SDM.

Another reason why teachers at Silver Hill may have questioned the commitment of district administration was their perception that their school did not receive an equitable share of county resources. Palmetto County's population is large and culturally diverse, and there are great extremes in income and lifestyle. The county has a strong tax base and impressive financial resources. Teachers often called attention to differences in their school's resources and those in wealthier parts of the district. Several stated that new schools had been built in other areas that did not have the overcrowding of Silver Hill. Before the annex was opened, a teacher remarked, "Whoever heard of an annex? Two Silver Hills, you know. They wouldn't do that anywhere else." As teachers completed their second year--and anticipated their third year--of teaching in a collection of portables bunched together on a former parking lot behind a renovated restaurant, they had to wonder if the district would

approve and finance innovations at their school.

Their doubts probably increased in May, 1992, when Palmetto County announced its fiscal plans for the following year. The proposed budget eliminated the SDM support team at the district level and the position of primary specialist at all elementary schools. Although Palmetto County's brochures on SDM stated that school-based management in budgeting had been in effect for more than a decade, school personnel, even those in SDM schools, had no say in the decision to eliminate the primary specialist position. If decision-making authority had truly moved from the district to the school site, Silver Hill's faculty and staff might have kept the primary specialist position by making concessions in other parts of their budget. But they did not have that option, and SDM schools had no say in the decision to eliminate the SDM support team. Respondents in May, 1992, noted that these budget decisions confirmed the district's lack of commitment to SDM.

Summary and Discussion

Some teachers at Silver Hill perceived that their roles changed during SDM's first two years of implementation. However, performers enacted very different roles than nonperformers, and some teachers did not believe SDM altered their roles at all. In this section I summarize teachers' perceptions of changes in their roles and account for the differences in teachers' role definitions.

Teachers at Silver Hill assumed some new responsibilities through SDM. All teachers participated in the curriculum revision process, and respondents said that many took part in faculty hiring. One teacher who was not a Council member initiated a proposal for change. In contrast, Council members assumed a number of responsibilities associated with their roles as SDM representatives. However, only a few Council members took responsibility for communicating effectively with grade-level colleagues. The breakdown in communication between the Council and the rest of the faculty and staff meant that almost all SDM responsibilities fell to Council members only. The faculty's definition of SDM as a representative form of governance may have contributed to some Council members' failure to perceive the importance of effective two-way communication with the rest of the faculty.

SDM ostensibly conferred upon all faculty the right to express their views and concerns. Some teachers, however, did not perceive they had that right. Many--including teachers on continuing contract--believed that failed communication limited their opportunities to provide input. Some untenured faculty believed that being outspoken was risky. In a sense, that perception may also have been a result of ineffective communication. SDM performers, whether tenured or not, believed that SDM enabled them to express their views openly and candidly. They stated that they understood SDM and its potential. They

perceived that SDM changed school governance and enabled faculty to participate actively without fear of reprisals. Had communication about SDM been more effective, the teachers who were afraid to express concerns openly and candidly may also have believed that SDM gave them that right.

Almost all teachers at Silver Hill learned that school change is slow and difficult, and there was a consensus among respondents in May, 1992, that school improvement should involve all faculty and staff. Because SDM became increasingly distant for audience and outsiders, they did not gain other understandings. In contrast, performers believed they increased their understandings of school change, group processes, and school and district policies. Almost all performers broadened their perspectives of school problems and improved their leadership skills.

A number of performers believed that they changed personally through SDM involvement. Several stated that they gained confidence because of their SDM participation. Performers believed that SDM empowered them to change and improve their school. Audience and outsiders did not report such a change in their sense of efficacy. Effective communication might have engaged these teachers more actively in SDM and suggested to them that they too could be change agents.

Performers also reported greater changes in their relationships with role partners. The participation of audience and outsiders in hiring and curriculum revision influenced collegial relationships among those faculty. In particular, teachers' participation in hiring increased their perceptions of faculty collegiality. In addition, performers described changes in collegial relationships that broke traditional norms of isolation and noninterference. Council members said they developed strong bonds with one another and learned to deal with conflict. Faculty sometimes sought information from Council members and brought their concerns to them. Council members also encountered criticism and resentment from some faculty.

Teachers' relationships with administrators changed only when administrators communicated clearly that SDM altered traditional governance. Administrative behavior strongly influenced teachers' definitions of SDM and their perceptions of their decision-making authority. Consequently, administrators had to be reflective about the impact of their words and actions and sensitive to teachers' perceptions of their behavior. Assistant principals at Silver Hill did not discern the complexity of this role, and their actions convinced many teachers that they did not support SDM. The principal worked to communicate to teachers that he welcomed their involvement in school decisions. Consequently, teachers perceived that their relationships with him changed. In contrast, Palmetto County's massive district administration included some administrators who either misunderstood SDM or simply disregarded it. In particular, middle management--the district administrators who dealt most directly with school participants--resisted SDM. In

doing so, they communicated to teachers that SDM did not increase their authority in decision domains that the district had always controlled. Perceiving that they lacked that authority, teachers did not believe that their relationships to the district changed and did not view SDM as a strategy for restructuring their school.

Teachers' perceptions of SDM greatly influenced their ability to redefine their roles. Their collective definition of SDM as a Council activity meant that there were different experiences of SDM among the faculty. SDM performers assumed more rights and responsibilities and experienced greater personal change than nonperformers. They also altered their relationships with role partners more dramatically than their fellow teachers. The few changes reported by audience and outsiders were related to their involvement in hiring and curriculum revision. In effect, when they participated in those activities, they were performers, if only temporarily.

Teachers' perceptions also defined the parameters of their decision-making authority. When the district was ambiguous about teachers' decision domains and power, the faculty was divided and unsure about the meaning of SDM. The principal invited teachers to share his authority, and teachers who were active in SDM--and thus close to him and the process--perceived that they held that power. During SDM's implementation, some district administrators communicated their nonsupport to teachers. The support of the principal and the nonsupport of district administration ultimately meant that teachers perceived their authority extended as far as--but no farther than--the principal's office.

Last, teachers' perceptions of SDM's goals influenced the ways in which their roles changed. Perceiving SDM as a way to professionalize teaching by giving teachers greater collective input meant that their collegial relationships would change by virtue of their sharing of decisions. That definition also meant that the door was open for changes in teachers' relationships to administrators. The principal kept the door open, while teachers said district administrators slammed it shut. Teachers' collegial relationships and their relationships with the principal underwent a number of changes, but their relationship to the district office remained unchanged.

Teacher role change was experienced by a relative few at Silver Hill, and the changes documented in this study may not seem significant to some readers. However, it is important to remember that limitations placed on teacher decision making by the district administration meant that teachers' authority did not match the definition of SDM suggested by advocates. Further, the school's size and limitations on participants' time made the adoption of a representative form of governance the school's most realistic response to implementing SDM. Although that model has the potential for improving school decision making, it presented barriers to participation for many teachers at Silver Hill. Last, teachers and administrators at the school were experimenting with a form of school governance for which there

were no guides and in which they had no experience. If the extent of teacher role change at Silver Hill does not match the predictions of SDM advocates, readers should not conclude that SDM does not provide an environment that is supportive of role change. Performers at Silver perceived that their roles changed dramatically, and those changes occurred during the implementation of a limited model of SDM. Instead of dismissing SDM's potential for fostering role change, scholars and practitioners should examine the changes that did occur and then consider how Silver Hill's model of SDM could be improved.

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